

RELIGIOUS ELEMENTS IN SANSKRIT POETIC TECHNIQUE

On literary and linguistic evidence it is now accepted without any reservation that the Vedic literature has had an uninterrupted development gradually evolving into Classical Sanskrit literature. Yet, a superficial comparison of the two literary corpuses would perhaps suggest essential differences in structure, thought and contents. To any one looking at the basic difference between the two literatures, the religious-philosophical character of the Vedic would be as striking as the patently secular features of the Classical. But when one surveys the growth and development of the literature as a whole, presented through the medium of Sanskrit, the religious and secular traits appear to be so closely interconnected as to defy such a separate identification.

The presence of secular elements in the Vedic literature is as evident as the presence of religious elements in the Classical. It would be the main objective of this Paper to see how far certain religious elements have determined the character of Sanskrit *kāvya* both in theme and in content. It appears that the religio-didactic tendencies of the pre-classical period have subsisted as a factor providing enrichment of the secular descriptive motifs. In identifying those elements which strengthened the *kāvya* style and technique we would be paying due heed not merely to the creative aspects of the contributions of the poets of the Classical period in this respect but examine also the nature of the theoretical concepts that were being formulated and their bearing on the poet's art and his thinking in general. Any problems that arose in the course of accommodating the religious elements within the secular form of poetry will also be examined.

The secular use of Sanskrit as a classical language dates back to the metrical Upanishadic period where the religious ideas were expressed in a style and form almost akin to that of the classical *kāvya*. Historically the period is coeval with that of early Buddhism, which appears to have used certain literary devices to propagate the religion in the same way as the Upanishads. The metrical *Upanishads* represented by the *Kāṭhaka*, *Svetāśvatara* and *Kena Upanishads*, use a verse form and

descriptive technique not different from that of classical Sanskrit. The *Kāṭhaka*, however, has the greatest literary value among them as it develops the theme — the Nāciketasa story — using narrative and dialogue to provide a dramatic setting for the exposition of Upanishadic philosophy. The language, metrical rhythms, allegorical and illustrative imagery and the pithy style adumbrates most of the characteristic features of the classical diction of Sanskrit. It has accordingly been considered as a successful attempt to render philosophy through poetry. Some of the aspects of language and style observed in the *Kāṭhaka* and and *Śvetāśvatara* deserve to be studied more closely for it appears that such traits were carried over and effectively used by classical poets in handling religious themes or in embroidering descriptive motifs. We shall also observe in the course of our discussion how certain characteristics of Upanishadic style such as the gnomic-didactic mode of expression becomes a distinctive feature of Sanskrit writing in all *kāvya* genres.

It is indeed remarkable that the first developed specimens of Sanskrit *kāvya* owe their impetus to the necessity of expounding Buddhist doctrines by using a secular medium of expression. Although orthodox Buddhism proscribed the use of Sanskrit, which as the vehicle of Brahmanic thought, was naturally averse to Buddhist teachings, the works of the poet-philosopher, Aśvaghōṣa, displays the classical poetical art in a developing but matured form. The *Saundarananda* and the *Buddhacarita*, the two poems which adopt the *mahākāvya* style, essentially contain all that the classical Sanskrit poetical theory recognises as the best in poetry. What he says at the end of the *Saundarananda* is quite significant for he has attempted to use a sensuous poetical medium to draw his listeners to the Buddhist faith (*ityeṣa vyupaśāntaye na rataye*) using the *kāvya* form (*kāvyopacāra*) and where deviation from the religious theme was necessary, he had followed the rules of the poetical art (*kāvyadharmā*). From these observations of Aśvaghōṣa it is clear that he was using a developed literary art together with a knowledge of its theory to propagate Buddhist doctrine in a manner reminiscent of the Upanishadic thinkers, who had used certain literary features such as the narrative-dialogue style, analogy, simile-metaphor and metrical variations in verse. Aśvaghōṣa lays emphasis on the quality of quiescence (*śāmikam*) which, in his opinion, is the essence of his poetry and not the quality of gracefulness or charm (*lalita*)¹. This declaration of his aim is also not without some significance in later poetical theory which added *sāntarasa* as the ninth *rasa* to the existing eight *rasas*.

The poems of Aśvaghōṣa contain adequate material² showing how

1. tad buddhvā śāmikam yad tad avahitam ito grāhyaṃ na lalitam (*Saundarananda* XVIII.63).

2. A fairly comprehensive study of Aśvaghōṣa's use of various forms of assonance, rhyme and imagery is found in H. H. DIWEKAR, *Les Fleurs de Rhétorique dans l'Inde*, Paris, 1930.

he exploited the resources of the language and the *kāvya* style to expound Buddhist religion and philosophy. Particularly interesting is his use of repetitive, assonant sound patterns and mellifluous rhymes to convey various moods. Repetition of words and syllables becomes a characteristic feature of his style and in some similes, especially, he repeats the phrases to achieve a didactic effect in the manner often followed by Buddhist texts³.

Metaphors of the type *dharma-cakra*, *śoka-sāgara*, *duḥkhāgni*, befitting the theme are almost stereotyped and are traceable to the *Rāmāyana* or even to earlier Buddhist sources. In keeping with the theme of his poems, Aśvaghoṣa uses similes and metaphors for a decidedly utilitarian purpose in many a context. The terms of comparison in such instances are carefully chosen to evoke religious fervour. It has also been pointed out that for the most part the similes of the poems reflect a characteristically psychological interest consonant with the poet-philosopher's attitude to life and the consequent effort he has made « to derive from *Kāvya* writing the maximum of didactic power ». C.W. Gurner, in a study⁴ of what he terms the « introspective or psychological simile », used by Aśvaghoṣa, draws upon a wide range of examples from the epic poems showing how the « simile from consciousness and conduct » is « used either to illustrate a purely external object described or more frequently to illustrate one process of consciousness or conduct from another »⁵. This process of reversing the usual method of comparison becomes such a marked feature in Aśvaghoṣa's imagery that he should be given credit for introducing the innovation that influenced later *kāvya*. In illustrating a most sustained and developed type of psychological simile, Gurner refers to a serial simile⁶ from the description of the attack on the Buddha by Māra and his hosts. The sources of comparison echo religious principles and concepts of morality but in their rough-hewn form, as befits the purpose, lacks the finesse of the usual *kāvya* similes. As a preacher with a mission he felt compelled to choose such similes as well as to draw analogies from the field of medicine and psychology.

Among other figures of speech with which he is familiar special mention may be made of *yathāsankhya*, *dr̥ṣṭānta* and *kāraṇamālā*, figures used in the poems for emphatic assertion, logical deduction and enumeration of the series of causes (based on the cause-effect connexion postulated in Buddhism). Together with the simile these were effective as devices of rhetorical expression in illustrating various facets of the doctrine.

3. DIWEKAR, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

4. C.W. GURNER, *The Psychological Simile in Aśvaghoṣa*, in « Journal and Proceedings of the Asiatic Society of Bengal », Vol. XXVI, 1930, pp. 175-180.

5. GURNER, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

6. *Buddhacarita*, XIII.46-51.

He has also made judicious use of a literary device deriving from the Vedic riddle poetry with his own numerical riddles in verse. The enigmatic nature of the statement tended to heighten the curiosity of the listener who perhaps had to seek the aid of commentaries for further elucidation.

Aśvaghoṣa's poetical technique is essentially adapted to the purpose for which he used the *kāvya* medium, namely, effective narration of events so that the message he had to deliver would be clear in the minds of the listeners. To this end he has used every possible device of both the *śabda-* and *artha alankāras*, for expressing the overpowering religious emotion and not for merely displaying his mastery of the poetic art. It is in the forging of such a technique where the attention is focussed on the underlying continuity of the narrative and coherence of the story that he makes a distinctive contribution to the art. Consequently the structuring of the verses under prescribed themes and their grouping as well as the metrical variations which seem to accompany them play an important part in his narrative technique⁹. The emotional fervour appears so strong in certain descriptions that he effectively combines his passion for denouncing mundane happiness with indignant feelings towards womankind so as to produce satirical poetry, rare in Sanskrit *kāvya*¹⁰. The gnomic verse of a later period as found in the fable and the *śataka* literature inherited and developed this trait of Aśvaghoṣa's style paying special attention not only to the context but to the metrical form as well.

If Aśvaghoṣa used Sanskrit *kāvya* for other ends than those for which it was intended as a secular medium, Kālidāsa presents his poetry primarily to evoke sensuous feelings. In fact the latter appears to have perfected the art of writing erotic poetry so much that it would be inconceivable to consider religious elements in his poetical technique. Yet there is a strange mixture of the secular and the religious in Kālidāsa's poetical art that has given rise to controversy among the literary critics of Sanskrit.

In analysing the religious elements in the poetic art of Kālidāsa we have to consider mainly the two epic poems, where he shows his debt to such factors in the making of his poetic technique. Both the poems follow the *mahākāvya* model, the *Raghuvamśa* more closely fitting into the pattern than the *Kumārasambhava*, but bear themes historical or religious in conformity with the requirements of theory. The

7. DIWEKAR, *op. cit.*, pp. 64, 68-69 discusses the use of these figures of speech quoting examples from the two epics.

8. E. H. JOHNSTON, *The Buddhacarita*, Part II, Introduction p. XC refers to four examples from both poems.

9. See JOHNSTON, *op. cit.*, Introduction pp. LXXXVII-LXXIX for a discussion of these aspects of his poetry.

10. JOHNSTON, *op. cit.*, Introduction, p. XCVII.

miraculous and superstitious elements of religious myths contribute to the feeling for the marvellous (evoking *adbhutarasa*) and no other medium would be more appropriate for its setting than the epic. The two epics by comparison show that whereas in the *Raghuvamśa*, the exploitation of the marvellous and superhuman elements at the main points of the narrative is the way in which the disparate parts of the story are linked together, the *Kumārasambhava* parades all its divine heroes, yet reduces their actions to a human level linking them together with a view to the subordination to the main sentiment and thereby availing itself but little of the supernormal element.

It is in the *Kumārasambhava* that Kālidāsa develops the Śiva-Pārvaṭī myth imaginatively, bringing out those aspects of the story that enable him to enrich the poetical symbolism by combining the secular and religious elements. Canto III of the poem is the most significant in this respect as it begins with the allegorisation of the eternal conflict between the two ends of life, the passionate and the religious: Kāma personifying passion, trying to get the better of Śiva, obviously representing the spiritual force of life, *dharma*, with the aid of Rati (Kāma's consort) and Vasanta (Spring) — both being the stimulating influences of love. Although the irresistible force of love appears to succeed and overpower even the ascetic Śiva yet at that very moment the latter restrained himself and Kāma was reduced to ashes by the fire of spiritual power (in Śiva's eye).

In the unravelling of this conflict between the forces of passion and their opposite Kālidāsa displays how the conceptions of love and religiousness become inextricably intertwined in his treatment of the theme and what stamps it with poetical ingenuity is its slickness and fluency with no laboured effort made to propagate a faith as his predecessor, Aśvaghoṣa did. It is however, in the apparent contradictions of Kālidāsa's literary technique which allows him to set forth the most erotic scenes or descriptions (*Kumarasambhava* VIII and *Meghadūta*) against a strong religious background that we find a unique quality of his genius. Critics of Sanskrit poetical theory from Anandavardhana to Mammata have been divided in their opinions on this aspect of Kālidāsa's poetical technique but in the ultimate analysis the view of Anandavardhana¹¹ that poetical skill (*kaviśakti*) is the ultimate criterion seems to have prevailed.

In certain descriptions of deity found in both epics Kālidāsa seems to have been obviously influenced by certain descriptive devices used in the Upanishadic and other religious texts of the same character. The *Isā Upanishad* which belongs to the second group of metrical *Upanishads*, describes Brahman with the following contradictory attributes:

11. *Dhvanyāloka*, III, p. 316, ed. K. S. S., No. 135.

Anejadekaṃ manaso javīyo

Tad dhāvato'nyān atyeti tiṣṭhat (4)

Tad ejati tan naijati tad dūre tad vāntike

Tad antarasya sarvasya tadū sarvasyāśya bāhyataḥ (5)

and the *Kāṭhaka Upanishad* continues in the same manner —

Āsīno dūraṃ vrajati śayāno yāti sarvataḥ (i.2.21)

while the *Svetāśvatara* states thus:

Ya eko'varṇo bahudhā śaktiyogād varṇān anekān nihitārtho dadhāti
(iv. 1).

Sanskrit poets of the classical period follow the same method of using contradictory epithets in depicting godhead in similar contexts. Kālidāsa's word-picture of Brahma commencing with

Jagadyonir ayonis tvam jagadanto nirantakaḥ
Jagadādīr anādis tvam jagadīśo nirīśvaraḥ

and the four stanzas following it (*Kumārasambhava*, II.9-14) and the longer prayer in 16 stanzas (*Raghuvamśa* X.16-32) addressed to Viṣṇu are similarly phrased but more rhythmically expressed. Of course such expressions also developed into special tropes such as *virodha* and *virodhābhāsa* in Sanskrit *kāvya* as exemplified here.

Together with the religious elements which have thus permeated into Kālidāsa's technique and style didactic or gnomic traits have also conspicuously been drawn into his writings. A figure of speech, which he has perfected by his skilful use, — the *arthāntaranyāsa* — illustrates how his poetry is adept in epigrammatic phrasing or in epitomised expression. The *Meghadūta*, being not merely Kālidāsa's most secular lyrical composition but the best erotic poem in Sanskrit *kāvya*, one would hardly associate it with any religious tone or moralising tendency. Yet it is through the *arthāntaranyāsa*, which he neatly compresses into the last line or the last two lines of the rhythmic *mandākrāntā* metre, that he reflects on the vanities of life, the frustrations and misfortunes in a spirit of detachment and resignation, echoing the feeling that he had specially chosen this form as an effective figurative medium fitting into the cameo-like sketches of the lyric.

Considering the compositions of Kālidāsa's successors, next, we observe a marked element of sarcasm together with didactic and religious sentiment expressed forcefully in the anthologies and especially in the famous triad of *śatakas* (« centuries ») of Bhartṛhari. Bhartṛhari's verse is cast in the same mould as Aśvaghoṣa's, for espousing the cause of religion, from the Brahmanic point of view tinged with Buddhism. He uses an assortment of verse-forms, metrical structures and image types but the single stanza as a unit capable of expressing a complete

idea or situation assumes a stable form in his poetry and among the themes recurring in the *Nīti*, *Śṛṅgāra* and *Vairāgya śatakas* are the cultivation of virtue, renunciation and the vehement denunciation of womankind. These themes became the common stock of all gnomic and didactic poets of the period, who churned out individual poems or contributed verses to anthologies using *upamā*, *nidarśanā* and *dṛṣṭānta* to illustrate the subject matter for didactic or moral effect. Though there is no distinguishing epic or lyrical poem measuring up to the standard set by Aśvaghōṣa and Kālidāsa, the minor compositions of the period collectively and in an anonymous way, popularised and set in vogue the technique of combining a secular idiom with a religious content.

The *śatakas*, taking the form of *stotras* or poems in praise of deities, show more religious fervour than genuine poetical merit but evidently reflect the continuing trend of expressing religious thought through poetry. They are reminiscent of Kālidāsa's prayers in verse, addressed to Viṣṇu and Brahma (in his two epic poems), referred to earlier, and the later devotional passages, one by Māgha eulogising Kṛṣṇa (in *Śiśupālavadha*, XIV) and the second, by Bhāravī, paying homage to Śiva (in *Kirātārjunīya*, XVIII). The use of the *gauḍī* style and the artificiality of language and idiom are a marked feature of these *stotras* which have not been, therefore, successful in contributing anything significant to the development of religious *kāvya* except for keeping the form from losing its currency.

During the period of decline of Sanskrit *kāvya* the religious literature with a strongly devotional element nevertheless sustained its emotive appeal. It was further strengthened by the mystic inspiration evoked by the *bhakti* cult, which influenced the creation of rich and diverse literary forms for its propagation. The most delectable and original piece of writing to emerge late in this era is the *Gītagovinda*, a lyric as well as a religious poem, which has distilled the best qualities of both religious and secular elements. Matching sound to sense in rhythmic patterns, evolving sensuous imagery and fitting all these into erotic and mystic thought for expressing the moods and feelings with words that carry their nuances and subtle shades of meaning direct to the heart, the poem illustrates best how the technical resources of the classical language had been adopted to blend secular poetry with spontaneous devotional effusiveness. The work can therefore be considered as being the culmination of a literary trend originating in the poetry of Aśvaghōṣa, which chose the « grain » of religion and eschewed the « chaff » of poetical charm, and after a series of experimental efforts at combining the religious and the secular elements in varied proportions, blossomed into a developed genre at the hands of Jayadeva to whom the beauty of things secular and sensuous was nothing but the ultimate reality.

In the foregoing discussion we have attempted to show how San-

sanskrit poetry with its strong, secular flavour in its themes, contents and motifs and clearly differentiated in form and purpose from its predecessor, the Vedic literature, nevertheless carried along with it some of the associated or inherited traits deriving from religious elements. These elements which were woven with the secular into interesting literary patterns during the course of their development in classical Sanskrit *kāvya* were seen to be primarily reflected in the writings of some of the Sanskrit poets who either had a pronounced religious or didactic bias or used poetry to propagate religious faith. We cannot leave out of our survey the extent to which Sanskrit poetical theory recognised such religious elements in literary technique and the nature of the critical concepts and criteria that emerged as a result of such tendencies seen in the poetry. We propose to study this aspect in the light of the general aims of Sanskrit literature and the developments in the *rasa* theory as formulated by Sanskrit poetical theorists.

Although formal Sanskrit poetical theory commences with Bharata whose connexion with contemporary or known literary figures is uncertain, it cannot be overlooked that from at least the later stages of the Vedic period an incipient form of theorising on the art of poetry may well have existed. The basic idea that literature is motivated by four ends¹² — *dharma* (virtue/duty), *artha* (profit/wealth), *kāma* (pleasure) and *mokṣa* (liberation) shows a clear demarcation of aims, the worldly aims of *artha* and *kāma* being satisfied by poetry and other secular forms of writing and the moral and religious ends of *dharma* and *mokṣa* being fulfilled by religio-philosophical literature — has been generally accepted by all Sanskrit rhetoricians. The inclusion of *mokṣa*, as the highest end, was evidently dictated by the need to accommodate religious literature and also elevate the tone of poetry by adding a lofty non-material aim to the other three material objects conceived as the *tri-varga*. This requirement is emphasized by Abhinavagupta in the *Abhinavabhāratī*¹³. It also appears that the more reflective poet-theoreticians were constantly trying to get at the essence of poetry, which they defined in various ways and in their efforts to find this formulated and analysed the aesthetic experience in terms of the realisation of *rasa* and *dhvani* in poetry and drama. In the search for ideas and concepts the critics found it convenient to describe the experiences and mental states involved in literary appreciation by borrowing from the terminology of religious experience. Such terms as *ānanda*, referred to as the « distinguishing quality of pleasure » or artistic joy associated with *rasa*, and often used by Abhinavagupta¹⁴ and other writers to describe the highest

12. Bhamaha is one of the earliest to mention the four ends, the *caturvarga* in *Kāvyaśaṅkāra*, I.2.

13. *Abhinavabhāratī*, I, p. 334, Gaek. Edn.

14. See *Dhvanyālokalocana*, *op. cit.*, pp. 40-41 and S. K. DE, *History of Sanskrit Poetics*, Vol. II, Calcutta, 1960, pp. 40-41, for a comment thereon.

experience obtainable from poetry, and the extension of meaning given to it by Jagannatha who termed it « disinterested » or « dissociated » pleasure (*alaukika/lokottarāhlāda*)¹⁵ shows the clear connexion of poetical theory with philosophical thought. Perceptive critics such as Anandavardhana, Abhinavagupta, Mammaṭa, Viśvanātha and Jagannātha with their critical approach to literary criticism also show insight in analysing poetical technique and in depicting the aesthetic experience from a broader perspective, paying due regard to the religious and philosophical influences that were brought to bear on the poet's mind. Poetic intuition was considered to be above the ordinary — a transcendental experience (*alaukika-vyāpāra*)¹⁶, according to Kuntaka.

The *rasa* theory in the elaborate and detailed account of its genesis, as laid down by Bharata, has been the most influential of all Sanskrit aesthetic concepts both in its application to literature and in its effective impact on the concepts of later theorists. He refers to eight different *rasas* only, the four primary being *śṛṅgāra* (the erotic), *raudra* (the furious), *vīra* (the heroic) and *bībhatsa* (the disgusting) and the four, *hāsyā* (comic), *karuṇa* (the pathetic), *adbhuta* (the marvellous) and *bhayānaka* (the terrifying) each of which is respectively derived from the former quartet. Although these eight *rasas* were accepted as the authentic *rasas* by poets and critics for a long time, it is possible to conjecture that when the religious aim of literature was recognised it was necessary to formulate an additional criterion separately applicable for the evaluation of poetry and drama of a sober and reflective content. Just as *mokṣa* was included as the fourth aim, similarly *śāma* (tranquility) as the *sthāyibhāva* (permanent state) leading to *śānta rasa* was intended to be evoked by reading and study of poetry with a religious or didactic flavour. This has been the view of later critics like Abhinavagupta¹⁷ and even earlier theorists like Udbhaṭa had recognised its existence and attempted to explain it.

Buddhist and Jaina literature, and especially the two epic poems and dramas of Aśvaghōṣa together with the *Nāgānanda* of Sri Harṣa, have been considered as sources responsible for the formulation of the new concept of *śānta rasa*. At the end of the *Saundarananda*, Aśvaghōṣa admonishes the readers of the poem to concentrate on the quality of quiescence (*śāmikam*)¹⁸, which is the same as *śāma*, the *sthāyibhāva* of *śānta rasa*, in his poetry. This observation of Aśvaghōṣa confirms that poetry and drama, with an emphasis on religious ideals, were an important contribution to the development of Sanskrit *kāvya* in the early stages and that their distinctive aims were set forth with due regard to

15. S. K. DE, *op. cit.*, p. 41 and p. 254.

16. S. K. DE, *op. cit.*, pp. 587-589.

17. See V. RAGHAVAN, *The Number of Rasas*, Adyar, 1940, p. 29 and the extracts from *Abhinavabharati* cited therein.

18. RAGHAVAN, *op. cit.*, p. 22.

19. See f. n. 1.

theoretical norms prevalent during the period. Considering also the contrast he makes between the quality of *lalita*²⁰, which was generally accepted as a characteristic feature in secular *kāvya* such as the *Rāmāyana*, in poetical theory, and this quality, one is able to infer that a poet-dramatist like Aśvaghoṣa had made an important contribution to a technical development in Sanskrit *kāvya*, which perhaps influenced the formulation of theory to the extent of adding a ninth *rasa* to the existing eight *rasas*.

The majority of theoreticians in Sanskrit poetics have accepted the validity of the *śānta* *rasa* but there are a few who have either rejected it or included it within the eight *rasas* owing to the difficulty of representing *śānta* in the dramatic (*drśya*) form. It was also not conceivable that emotions or moods could be delineated in such a state when inactivity or quiescence is its essential nature²¹. Following the introduction of *śānta*, other related emotional states such as kindness (*preyas*), devotion (*bhakti*), affection (*sneha*), joy (*prīti*), faith (*śraddhā*) came to be added to the range of *rasas* and these perhaps reflect in turn the increasing attention paid by later poets and dramatists to the composition of devotional and mystic poems. If anything it shows how poetic theory accommodated itself to the growing demand for expressing in various forms of literary expression — lyric, epic, hymn poetry, and dramatic compositions — the values and ideals of sectarian religion.

Along with the development of later theory dealing with the number and scope of the *rasas* certain trends of poetical thought were directed on the nature of the aesthetic experience, its tendency to synthesise the *rasas* and reduce them to either one integrated *rasa* or single out one as the dominant *rasa*. The difficulties inherent in such an approach as adopted by certain writers (dramatists as well as theorists) are evident from a study of their views in historical perspective. While Aśvaghoṣa's *kāvya* was presented to readers with the purpose of expressing religion through poetry, Kālidāsa, a poet of nature, evoked the sensuous and erotic sentiments in all his compositions whereas the dramatist Bhavabhūti struck a plaintive note and conveyed a sense of pathos in his dramas. It is therefore clear that each one of them had a dominant *rasa* in view, theoretically speaking, Aśvaghoṣa — *śānta*, Kālidāsa — *ṣṛṅgāra* and Bhavabhūti, *karuṇa*²².

Theoreticians had to examine the problem of the integration of all *rasas* or the dominance of one over the others in the light of theoretical speculation and the literary aims of the best writers. Abhinavagupta advocates a fundamental *rasa* in *śānta* with the other *rasas* as its modi-

20. *Kāvyaśya hi lalitocitasanniveśacārunaḥ* is the definition given of a *kāvya* by Anandavardhana. *Dhvanyāloka*, I.2 vṛtti p. 45.

21. RAGHAVAN, *op. cit.*, pp. 42-46.

22. *Eko rasaḥ karuṇa eva nimittabhedād bhinnāḥ prthak prthagiva śrayate vartāt* (Uttararāmacarita, III.47).

fications just as much as Bhavabhūti upholds *karuṇa* as the main and the rest as modifications. As the best *kāvya* compositions were pivoted on themes evocative of the *śṛṅgāra rasa* for the most part it would be surprising if the theory had not paid due regard to its primacy among *rasas* and set it up as the most dominant of all. Though appearing late, several theoretical expositions from the 10th century onwards were occupied with the analysis of *śṛṅgāra* and the earliest known is Rudrabhaṭṭa's *Śṛṅgāratilaka* where *rasa* is examined with particular reference to poetry. But the best treatise was to follow and in the *Śṛṅgāraprakāśa*, Bhoja accepts *śṛṅgāra* as the only *rasa* and deals with it in elaborate detail, strongly emphasising the erotic as well as religious aspects of the sentiment. The rhetorical treatises, written later in this period also pursued the same idea of expatiating on *śṛṅgāra* as the principal *rasa*, and serving as manuals to guide writers of erotic *kāvya*. The tendency to elevate *śṛṅgāra rasa* and equate it with the religious sentiment reaches its most developed phase in the *Ujjvalanīlamanī* of Rūpa Goṣvāmi, who conceived of the Vaiṣṇava doctrine *ujjvala* («inflamed passion»), attained in the course of realisation of the state of *bhakti*, and this experience is also interpreted in terms of the *śṛṅgāra rasa*²³.

The seeming reconciliation of *śṛṅgāra* and *śānta*, opposing *rasas*, was a compromise effected in the above erotico-religious treatises through a long process of interaction of religions, devotional poetry on secular, erotic poetry and their corresponding reactions in poetical theory. We have also observed how some of the best poets of Sanskrit — Aśvaghoṣa, Kālidāsa and Bhartṛhari — used secular and religious traits in their poetic technique but showed their poetic sensibilities in the way they lay emphasis on one or the other. In the case of their successors the lines of demarcation are often blurred and a tendency to consider the erotic and the religious sentiments as one and the same manifests itself. Even critics of Sanskrit poetical theory were hard put to it to explain contradictions in the poetic art of Kālidāsa and were compelled to justify certain descriptions as bearing the hallmark of his originality and genius²⁴. As the critics of the later period of Sanskrit poetical theory were very much preoccupied with the task of defining the aesthetic experience which necessarily led them to an examination of the relationship between the aesthetic and the mystic or religious experience these difficulties were accentuated.

23. See S. K. DE, *Sanskrit Poetics as a Study of Aesthetic*, California, 1963, pp. 60-61.

24. See J. TILAKASIRI, *Kalidasa's Poetic Art and Erotic Traits*, in «Annals of Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute», Diamond Jubilee, Volume pp. 365-374, for a fuller discussion.